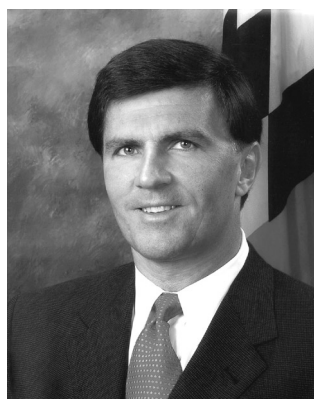


Intercounty Connector Study Underway

Project planners are studying a multi-modal east-west highway connecting central and eastern Montgomery County with northwestern Prince George's County. The Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration (SHA) initiated planning efforts this spring on the Intercounty Connector (ICC) study. Kick-off of the study began with an Interagency Workshop at the University of Maryland where more than 100 representatives from 28 Local, State and Federal agencies gathered to discuss study efforts. The Workshop featured remarks from Governor Robert L. Ehrlich.



The project kick-off continued with two Open Houses held in both Montgomery and Prince George's counties at the end of June. More than 650 individuals participated in the Open Houses that included sharing project information and encouraging participants to provide suggestions and community information to Study Team members.

The ICC is a proposed multi-modal east-west highway to link existing and planned development areas between the I-270 and

I-95/US 1 corridors within Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

SHA will develop a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as part of the study that will include analysis of natural, human and cultural environmental resources in the Study Area. The first phase of the study is "Scoping," to introduce the project to the public and local communities and to determine a full range of alternatives to be evaluated for more detailed study during the subsequent phase of the study.

All study efforts are being conducted in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which established a national policy of preserving and enhancing the human, cultural and natural environment for future generations while meeting the transportation and other needs of the present generation (see NEPA article on page 3).

The ICC study is being conducted by the SHA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in coordination with Montgomery County and Prince George's County. In addition, several State and Federal review, resource and regulatory agencies are participating in the study.



Open Houses Attract Public

More than 650 people came out to learn about the ICC study and how they could get involved. "How will this project impact the environment?" "How will the ICC be funded?" "How bad will congestion get?" and "How long will the study take?" were some of the questions asked by meeting attendees. Participants were able to talk with project team members, view maps of the Study Area, and comment on the project. More than 150 participants left comments for the SHA Study Team to consider as they move into the next phase of study.

One Open House was held on June 26 at John F. Kennedy High School in Montgomery

County, another was held on June 30 at High Point High School in Prince George's County.

Attendees were able to review stations or information areas including:

- History and Project Background
- Purpose and Need
- Project Area Traffic
- Alternatives Scoping
- Environmental and Community Issues
- Public Involvement Opportunities

If you were not able to attend June's
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Purpose and Need Under Development

As part of the study process, the SHA has developed the “Purpose and Need Statement” for the ICC project. This document is one of the most important chapters of the Environmental Impact Statement. The Purpose and Need Statement establishes why the agency is proposing to study the project and is the foundation to determine if alternatives meet the needs in the area.

The Purpose and Need Statement is developed in concert with Local, State and Federal agencies as well as the public. To view a recently updated Purpose and Need Statement, please visit the ICC Study web site at www.iccstudy.org. The Study Team will solicit comments from the public on the Purpose & Need until the completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Below is a summary of the current Purpose and Need.

The Purpose

The proposed Intercounty Connector (ICC) project is intended to link existing and proposed development areas between I-270 and I-95/US 1 corridors within central and eastern Montgomery County and northwestern Prince George’s County with a state-of-the-art, multi-modal east-west highway that limits access and accommodates passenger and goods movement. This transportation project is intended to increase community mobility and safety; to facilitate the movement of goods and people to and from economic centers; to provide cost-effective transportation infrastructure to serve existing and future development patterns reflecting local land use planning objectives; to help restore the natural, human and cultural environments from past development impacts in the project area; and to advance homeland security.

Study Area Needs

Community Mobility and Safety

Mobility in the developed portions of Montgomery and northwestern Prince George’s counties is severely limited, in part because there is no continuous high capacity transportation facility. This lack of mobility limits job opportunities, interaction between communities, access to government and community services, and contributes to a decreased quality of life.

Movement of Goods and People to-and-from Economic Centers

A multi-modal east-west highway north of the Capital Beltway is needed to support the continued attraction and retention of businesses and employment opportunities in the region.

Local Land Use

An east-west regional highway facility has been long a part of local land use planning in order to support the region’s orderly growth and development patterns and is needed to help serve existing and planned communities.

Environmental Stewardship

Alternatives will be developed in an environmentally sensitive manner using state-of-the-art measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts. Further, alternatives will include appropriate environmental restoration and enhancements to help bring about improvements to natural, cultural and human environmental conditions.

Homeland Security

A new multi-modal east-west highway will provide much-needed capacity for military access, population evacuation and emergency vehicle access in and around the National Capital region. In addition, it would provide a grid of high capacity transportation needed in the event of an emergency or sudden need for access.

Project Timeline

Open Houses-----	June 2003
• Prepare Preliminary Findings from Scoping Process	
• Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Analysis	
Alternatives Public Meetings-----	Fall/Winter 2003
• Identify Alternatives for Detailed Study	
• Detailed Planning, Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Analysis	
• Prepare Draft EIS	
Public Hearings-----	Fall 2004
• Select Alternative(s)	
• Prepare Final EIS	
Record of Decision-----	Summer 2005

Environmental Streamlining

Environmental streamlining is an initiative aimed at identifying ways that transportation and environmental agency representatives can more effectively work together in a collaborative and cooperative manner to avoid unnecessary delays in processing environmental documents, approvals and permits. The environmental streamlining provision is contained in the Federal transportation law passed in 1998, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). This provision calls on Federal agencies to jointly develop a coordinated environmental review process for transportation projects.



In 2002 President Bush issued Executive Order 13274, Environmental Stewardship and Transportation Infrastructure Project Reviews, which formed a Federal Transportation Infrastructure Streamlining Task Force to monitor progress of priority projects selected for expedited environmental reviews and to examine policy issues that promote interagency coordination and improved environmental decision-making. The US Secretary of Transportation designated the Intercounty Connector project as one of the 13 transportation priority projects being monitored by the Federal Task Force.

Environmental streamlining expedites the process by requiring agencies to conduct concurrent rather than sequential reviews, set time periods for reviews and engage in a dispute resolution process to avoid delays. Streamlining does not apply to or make any changes to the environmental protections that must be considered during the process. As an environmental streamlining priority project, the ICC receives close Federal and State oversight. For more

information on the Environmental Streamlining initiative, please visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/stewardship/taskforce.htm.



History of the ICC

The Intercounty Connector has been studied off and on for approximately five decades. Below is a brief history of the project.

- 1950s: An outer circumferential freeway (Outer Beltway) is proposed by the National Capital Planning Commission for the Washington, D.C. area.
- 1968: Montgomery County's land use planners drop the Outer Beltway and retain the ICC link between I-270 and US 50
- 1979: The SHA initiates the first of three project planning studies for the ICC.
- 1983 and 1997: SHA issues a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and holds public hearings for the ICC. No final decisions were made in either study.
- 2003: U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta places the ICC on a project streamline list to receive accelerated environmental reviews under President Bush's Environmental Stewardship and Transportation Infrastructure Project Reviews Executive Order.
- June 2003: Kick-off of the ICC study efforts begin with an Interagency Workshop and Public Scoping Open Houses.

Open House Announcements

Intercounty Connector studies began this June with two public Open Houses. The Open Houses were announced through news releases, advertisements placed in local newspapers, fliers placed throughout the Study Area, on the project website (www.iccstudy.org) and in Information Centers. In addition, the ICC study team mailed bulk-rate postcards announcing the Open Houses to more than 100,000 residents and businesses in the Study Area. To date, we've heard from about 100 people who received a postcard after the meetings occurred.

The ICC study team was troubled by this and investigated the situation. Apparently, a portion of the bulk mail was misdirected by the United States Postal Service, therefore, causing a significant delay in individuals receiving the postcards. Unfortunately, the U.S. Postal Service does not guarantee a delivery date for bulk rate. The ICC study team apologizes for the late mailing and any inconvenience and we are researching additional cost-effective mailing options.

Public Involvement Next Steps

The ICC Study Team wants to hear from you. Public involvement activities are important to study efforts.

“SHA is interested in hearing from as many people as possible about our study efforts,” said Wesley Mitchell, SHA’s ICC Project Manager. “After all, no one knows more about a community than the people who live there. They are the experts.”

Offer your feedback by attending public meetings and giving your comments directly to team members. Below are ways to receive information and provide comments.

Web Site

Access our web site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

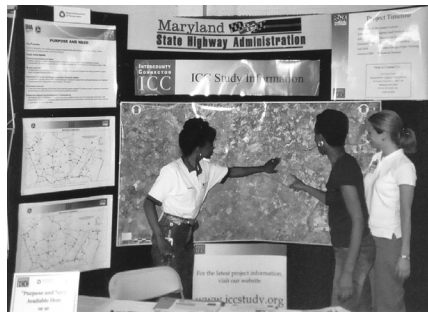
Information Centers

Mini resource centers have been created throughout the Study Area to allow you to look at ICC information on your own time. Visit our web site for a listing of locations.

Toll Free Number

Call our toll free number 1-866-462-0020 to ask questions and sign up for the mailing lists.

SHA employees exhibit ICC information at the Montgomery County fair.



Maryland Department of Transportation

STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF PLANNING AND
PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING
MAIL STOP C-301
BOX 717
BALTIMORE, MD 21203-0717

Open Houses Attract Public

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Open Houses, you still can tell us what you think. Simply log onto www.iccstudy.org and go to the Public Meetings section. From there, the browser will direct you through the virtual meeting, where you can see all the materials presented at the Open Houses. Take a moment to register your comments about the meeting and ICC study efforts.

The Study Team’s goal is to keep you informed and involved. Open Houses will be held at project milestones throughout the study. The next public meetings are scheduled for the fall at which specific alternatives will be presented. Stay tuned for the dates and locations of these meetings.

Contact Us

To contact us, sign-up to be on our mailing list or to receive project information about the ICC, including notification of public meetings, please visit our web site and click on the Contact Us section. In addition, you can write to the below address and request to be added to the ICC mailing list.

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